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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

29 July 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Air Force Proposal for Ten-Year Estimate of Soviet
Military Strengths and Capabilities

1. The ACSI, USAF, has requested that consideration be given to extending the period covered by the existing terms of reference to NIE 11-4-59 so as to permit the community to estimate the Soviet military threat through 1969. The Air Force position has been noted on the terms of reference for 11-4-59 (Cover Sheet, 17 July) and is more fully stated in a letter from Colonel Hall to Mr. Kent, excerpts of which are attached.

2. The Board of National Estimates does not believe that ten-year estimates of Soviet military strengths, in anything approaching the detail of NIE 11-4, would be soundly enough based to warrant their dissemination in a National Intelligence Estimate. Five-year projections are uncertain enough; ten-year ones, in the same detail would be virtually indefensible as serious intelligence.

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3. The Board of National Estimates nevertheless recognizes the considerations set forth by the Air Force. It believes that if the intelligence community is to furnish long-term estimates it should do so not by changing the character of NIE 11-4-59, but rather by covering the ten-year period in a new and separate NIE, shorter in length and different in character from NIE 11-4-59. This new paper would contain whatever long-term estimates on Soviet military affairs which the intelligence community thought could justifiably be made and disseminated as national intelligence. The paper will necessarily include estimates on Soviet economic development and other subjects.

4. If the USIB is willing to undertake an estimate of this character, it is recommended that terms of reference for this estimate be prepared in O/NE and discussed by the USIB representatives in the usual manner. It is also recommended that the USIB target date for this estimate be set for some time after the completion of NIE 11-4-59.

5. This matter will be on the agenda for the USIB meeting of 4 August.


Deputy Assistant Director
National Estimates

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Attachment

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